

THE PROJECTED AND PERCEIVED IMAGE OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

While Tanzania has enjoyed increasing popularity as a tourism destination, there is a lack of research on Tanzania's tourism image. This research aims at examining the government's projected and perceived image of Tanzania and identifying the congruency between these two images. The study utilized the Tanzania Tourist Board and Tanzania Travel and Tourism Online websites as well as 364 blogs on travel to Tanzania between 2003 and 2008 from TravelPod. Results indicate that while there is a relative level of congruency between the projected and perceived images of Tanzania, many visitors are beginning to note the negative effects of tourism on the local communities. Furthermore, while the government is attempting to project Tanzania as a business and leisure destination, Tanzania is currently only being perceived as a leisure destination in online travel blogs. Implications for destination marketing organizations were discussed.

KEYWORDS: Content Analysis, Destination Image, Projected Image, Perceived Image, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry was recording a multiplier effect of up to 1.8 for every tourist dollar spent in the country (Nkwame, 2008). Furthermore, according to a poverty profile analysis "households that are involved in tourism have lower poverty rates than food crop producers, fish producers, and mining sector households" (World Bank, 2005, pg 48). Tourism has been identified as one of the few viable economic opportunities in large parts of the least developed world (Grosspietsch, 2006). With its United Nations' distinction of being a least developed country and having a 2002 estimated poverty level of 36% (The World Factbook, 2007), Tanzania is now consciously developing tourism as a major asset in reducing poverty levels and increasing foreign exchange earnings and GDP. Tanzania currently hosts about 700,000 visitors and generates an estimated 786 million US dollars in direct foreign exchange earnings from tourism activities (Nkwame, 2008). By 2010, Tanzania plans to generate over one billion US dollars and attract one million visitors (Philemon, 2007).

In order to attain their tourism goals, it is imperative that Tanzania create and market a strong and coherent destination brand, which is built upon a congruent perceived and projected image. As Cai (2002) indicated, incongruities between the perceived and projected image at both the affective and attitude levels pointed directly to the weaknesses of target marketing and positioning strategies of destination marketing organizations. Furthermore, understanding the target market increases the level of congruency among the perceived and projected image (Cai, 2002). Therefore, examining the congruency of the projected and perceived image of Tanzania in its major target market is a fundamental step towards the development of Tanzania's destination branding strategies.

In a 2007 interview, Jumanne Maghembe, the Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, indicated that the United States is currently one of the core markets for Tanzania (Tanzania's Tourism Push, 2007). Given the importance of image congruency and the lack of research on Tanzania as a destination, the purposes of this research are to study Tanzania's current projected image and the visitor's perceived image of Tanzania in the United States and to determine the level of congruency among the projected and perceived image. The information that can be gained from this research can be a vital contribution to the success of Tanzania's current and future marketing efforts as well as in their aim to create a destination brand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination Image and Its Components

Creating and understanding a destination's image is a prerequisite to forming the destination's brand. Based upon the consistent destination image element mix, destination can be identified and distinguished from other destinations through positive image building (Cai, 2002, pg 722). While there have been many attempts at defining destination image, there is still no consensus among researchers on the definition. For the purposes of this particular research, destination image is defined as "a concept formed by the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation as the consequence of two closely interrelated components: perceptive/cognitive evaluations referring to the individual's own knowledge and beliefs about the object, and the affective appraisals relating to the individual's feelings towards the object (Beerli and Martin, 2004, p658).

Cognitive component is based on external stimuli and is the "sum of beliefs and attitudes of an object leading to some internally accepted picture of its attributes" (Gartner, 1993, pg 193). The affective image component is the "motives one has for destination selection" (Gartner, 1993, p196) and is based on the personal needs and wants. The relationship between cognitive component and affective component follows the general agreement that the cognitive component is an antecedent of the affective component and that the evaluative responses of consumers stem from their knowledge of the objects (Anand, Holbrook and Stephens, 1988; Russel and Pratt, 1980 and Stern and Krakover, 1993). The cognitive and affective image produces an overall, or compound, image relating to the positive, or negative, evaluation of the product or brand, based upon a decision is made on what destination to choose (Gartner, 1993).

Image Formation Process

The image formation process is a “construction of mental representation of a destination on the basis of information cues delivered by the image formation agents and selected by a person” (Tasci & Gartner, 2007, p414). According to Gunn (1988), there are two general types of information cues, the organic image and induced image. Organic images are those that are generated by newspapers, periodicals, and books. These images are powerful and have a great impact on a destination’s image. Induced images are images which are formed with a “conscious effort to develop, promote, and advertise” (Gunn, 1988, pg 24). These images tend to be print and television advertisements, magazines articles, and travel packages and promotions created by its destination marketing organizations or tourist related businesses at the destination (Gunn, 1988). Based on Gunn's (1988) classification of organic and induced images, Gartner (1993) identified eight image formation agents; overt induced I, overt induced II, covert induced I, covert induced II, autonomous, unsolicited organic, solicited organic and organic image. The information cues or information agents serve as a secondary information sources to “fulfill three basic functions in destination choice: to minimize the risk that the decision entails, to create an image of the destinations, and to serve as a mechanism for later justification of the choice” (Beerli and Martin, 2004). The key difference between these two images is the amount of control the destination had over what was presented (Lehto and Choi, 2007). Compared to organic image, a destination has a greater deal of control over induced images portrayed of the destination.

While these information cues or information agents presented in various information sources were considered as projected image of a destination, they combine with the visitors’ personal factor or primary information source, to form the perceived image of a destination (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Pearce, 1982). Various personal factors including socio-demographic characteristics, motivations, and vacation experience (Lanzarote, Spain, Beerli and Martin, 2003; Beerli and Martin, 2004) may leads to distinctive interpretation of the projected image. Previous studies have found that age and education are the most important socio-demographic characteristics that affect how one perceives image (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Travel motivations influence the cognitive image component positively for first time travelers when there is congruency between the nature of the destination and the traveler’s motivations (Beerli and Martin, 2004). In addition, for first time travelers to a particular destination, the induced sources such as brochures the internet had no significant influence on the cognitive image. The only induced source that had any significant influence was travel agents. Organic and autonomous sources, as well as word of mouth, also had significant influence on the destination’s image (Beerli and Martin’s (2004)

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Although there has been extensive research on destination image and image formation due to its complex conceptual nature and its important role in influencing tourist decision making, research of image formation on the web for the least developing countries is still at an infancy stage. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

What images of Tanzania are projected by the country's national tourism websites?
 What is the image of Tanzania as perceived by visitors?
 What is the level of congruency present among the projected image and perceived image?

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Content was collected from online sources to study both the projected and perceived image of Tanzania. To determine the image projected by the Tanzanian government, a content analysis was conducted on Tanzania's national tourism websites: Tanzania Tourist Board (<http://www.tanzaniatouristboard.com>) and Tanzania's Travel and Tourism Online (<http://www.tanzaniatourisonline.com>). The Tanzania Tourist Board represents the official website for Tanzania tourism while Tanzania's Travel and Tourism Online is a joint collaboration between the government and business sector. The focus of this analysis was to determine the frequency of the cognitive and affective attributes used by the Tanzanian government and its private business sector to market and promote Tanzania as a destination. This analysis examined the overt induced image formation agents.

A content analysis was conducted on travel blogs on TravelPod (<http://www.travelpod.com>) to determine the perceived image of actual visitors to Tanzania. This analysis focused on the frequency of cognitive and affective attributes used by those who have visited Tanzania. This analysis examined the solicited, unsolicited organic image and organic formation agents. Only blogs with contents that pertained to a person's actual visit to Tanzania were analyzed. Furthermore, the blogs were written in English and entailed travel experiences to Tanzania between 2003 and 2008. The sample included 364 blogs with 6 from 2003, 13 from 2004, 40 from 2005, 97 from 2006, 107 from 2007, and 101 from 2008 (excluding blogs between October and December 2008).

Data Analysis

The analysis consisted of three steps. First, the data files were cleaned in order to identify the unique and meaningful words. The original data files contained words that did not have specific meanings, words that had various forms or formats, such as in different tenses or had several synonyms, and words that comprised of two or more vocabularies into one that they cannot be counted separately. These words were removed or transformed. Then, this research utilized the CATPAC program with Ward's cluster analysis to uncover the frequent cognitive and affective attributes among the projected and perceived images. CATPAC is a "self-organizing neural network" (Schmidt, 1999). The program scans a set of text and determines the frequency of words in the text. While many researchers use CATPAC, it does require the researcher to initially read through the text and determine which words are keywords and which can be eliminated (Schmidt, 1999).

CATPAC program identified 75 keywords for both perceived image and projected image of Tanzania. The keywords were organized into dimensions based on past research and dimensions specific to Tanzania.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Projected Image

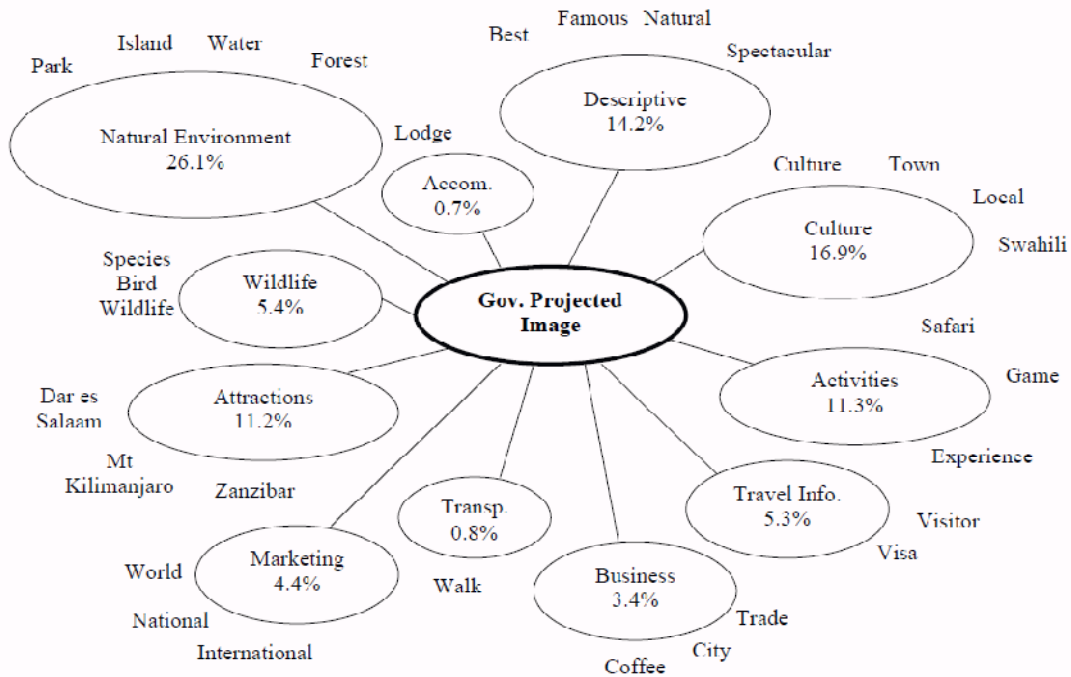
The government tourism websites, Tanzania Travel and Tourism Online and the Tanzania Tourist Board, serve a dual purpose. While they market the country as a top destination, they also provide realistic insight into the country's economy and society and includes travel information. Overall, the projected image focuses on the abundant natural resources and culture. However, at the same time, it is evident that the government and private business sector are attempting to diversify their image by including luxury accommodations and conference tourism.

Table 1 Dimensions and Frequency of Projected Image

Dimension	Keyword	Freq	Freq %	Dimension	Keyword	Freq	Freq %
Attractions 11.2%	Zanzibar	150	3.3	Culture 16.9%	Town	118	2.6
	Dar es Salaam	66	1.4		Culture	83	1.8
	Mt Kilimanjaro	65	1.4		Local	82	1.8
	Indian Ocean	59	1.3		Swahili	61	1.3
	Serengeti Nat. Park	51	1.1		Home	62	1.3
	Arusha	47	1.0		People	55	1.2
	Pemba	45	1.0		Old	53	1.1
	Mt Meru	34	0.7		Maasai	51	1.1
Descriptive 14.2%	Best	65	1.4		Village	49	1.1
	Long	65	1.4		Traditional	48	1.0
	Small	61	1.3		Century	41	0.9
	Popular	57	1.2		Population	41	0.9
	Large	55	1.2		Festival	38	0.8
	Good	49	1.1	Natural Environment 26.1%	Park	129	2.8
	Largest	42	0.9		Island	115	2.5
	Far	40	0.9		Water	111	2.4
	Natural	40	0.9		Forest	85	1.8
	Famous	37	0.8		Lake	85	1.8
	High	36	0.8		Coast	73	1.6
	Nearby	35	0.8		Beach	63	1.4
	Remote	35	0.8		Reserve	56	1.2
	Spectacular	34	0.7		Plains	48	1.0
Activities 11.3%	Safari	157	3.4		Coral	47	1.0
	Game	98	2.1		Crater	46	1.0
	Experience	94	2.0		Reef	44	1.0
	View	73	1.6		Mountain	43	0.9
	Fishing	57	1.2		Shore	43	0.9
	Climb	44	1.0		Land	42	0.9
Transportation	Walk	39	0.8		Tree	40	0.9
Wildlife 5.4%	Species	73	1.6		Marine	39	0.8
	Bird	66	1.4		Slopes	35	0.8
	Wildlife	61	1.3		Rain	33	0.7
	Fish	49	1.1		Sea	33	0.7
Accommodations	Lodge	34	0.7	Marketing 4.4%	World	80	1.7
Business 3.4%	Trade	71	1.5		National	73	1.6
	City	50	1.1		International	51	1.1
	Coffee	36	0.8	Travel Info 5.3%	Visitor	171	3.7
					Visa	72	1.6

Results of the CATPAC analysis uncovered 11 dimensions of image (Table 1). These dimensions include natural environment (26.1%), culture (16.9%), descriptive terms (14.2%), activities (11.3%), attractions (11.2%), wildlife (5.4%), travel information (5.3%), marketing (4.4%), business (3.4%), transportation (0.8%), and accommodations (0.7%). Figure 1 presents a graphical representation of the projected image dimensions based on their frequency levels.

Figure 1 Graphical Representation of Projected Image



The government websites serve as a one-stop source for information about Tanzania in general and for specific tourist attractions. The websites go into detail about the numerous activities, presents lodging and transportation options and guide travelers in deciding the best choice depending on preferences. Overall, the Tanzanian government clearly projects the culture and history, natural attractions, outdoor activities, options for both luxury and budget travelers. In addition, the government is incorporating business travel in its marketing efforts.

Perceived Image

Overall, the image of Tanzania as perceived by travelers who have blogged online about their travels is that Tanzania is a destination rich with culture and activities. Results of the CATPAC analysis uncovered eight dimensions of image (Table 2). These dimensions include attractions (8.1%), activities (20.5%), culture (22.7%), wildlife (3.6%), transportation (9.9%), natural environment (9.2%), descriptive terms (23%), and accommodations (3.2%).

Table 2 Dimensions and Frequency of Perceived Image

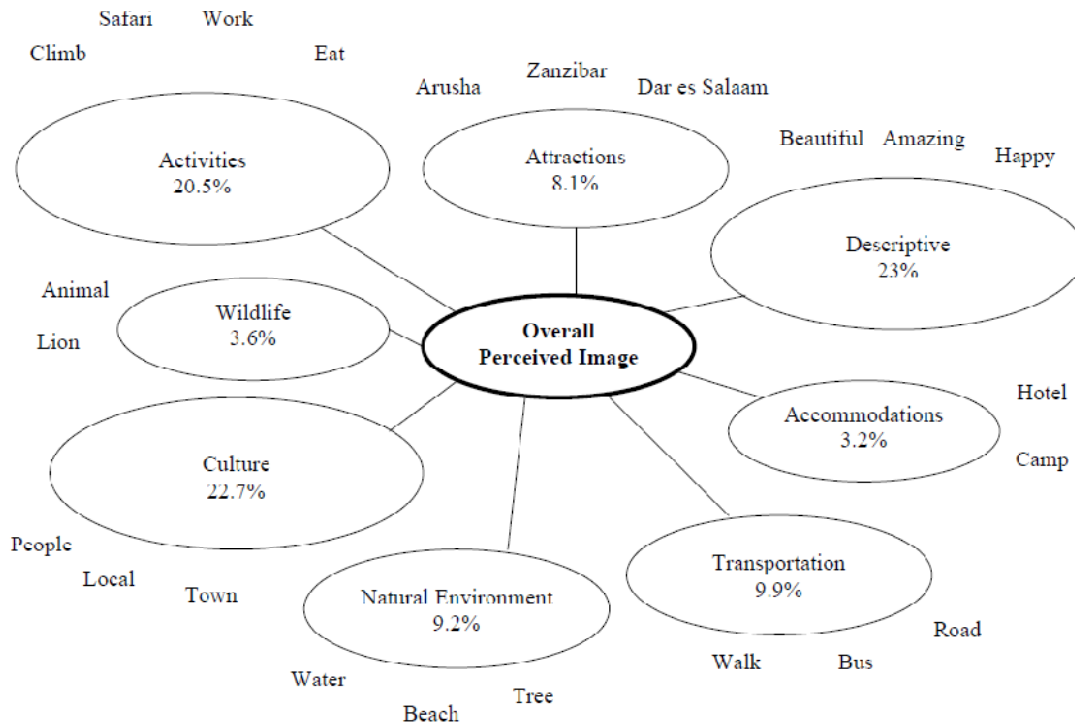
Dimension	Keyword	Freq	Freq %
Attractions 8.1%	Zanzibar	1266	2.0
	Dar es Salaam	1112	1.7
	Arusha	886	1.4
	Serengeti Nat. Park	725	1.1
	Mt Kilimanjaro	724	1.1
	Ngorongoro Crater	509	0.8
Activities 20.5%	Feel	1445	2.3
	Safari	1238	1.9
	Work	1135	1.8
	Group	985	1.5
	Eat	845	1.3
	-Food	802	1.3
	-Dinner	708	1.1
	-Lunch	668	1.1
	Climb	795	1.3
	Watch	715	1.1
	Picture	610	1.0
	Tour	524	0.8
	-Guide	676	1.1
	Experience	514	0.8
Wildlife 3.6%	Teach	501	0.8
	-School	819	1.3
	Animal	868	1.4
Transportation 9.9%	Lion	784	1.2
	Elephant	604	1.0
	Walk	1765	2.8
	Bus	1296	2.0
	Drive	1179	1.9
	Road	996	1.6
Natural Environment 9.2%	Driver	517	0.8
	Ride	508	0.8
	Water	1315	2.1
	Beach	1120	1.8
	Tree	742	1.2
	Park	695	1.1
	Mountain	628	1.0
	Island	623	1.0
	Crater	614	1.0

Dimension	Keyword	Freq	Freq %
Descriptive 23%	Good	1569	2.5
	Little	1491	2.3
	Long	1257	2.0
	Great	1128	1.8
	Nice	967	1.5
	Pretty	879	1.4
	Big	872	1.4
	Small	814	1.3
	Beautiful	715	1.1
	Amazing	687	1.1
	Old	603	0.9
	Better	555	0.9
	Far	535	0.8
	Fun	529	0.8
	Different	505	0.8
	Hot	503	0.8
	Best	499	0.8
	Happy	496	0.8
Culture 22.7%	People	2357	3.7
	Local	1102	1.7
	Town	1085	1.7
	Village	1033	1.6
	Home	1023	1.6
	Kid	851	1.3
	Man	811	1.3
	Guy	805	1.3
	House	688	1.1
	Maasai	678	1.1
	Children	613	1.0
	Friend	595	0.9
	Woman	592	0.9
	White	570	0.9
Accommo- dations 3.2%	Money	569	0.9
	Swahili	561	0.9
	Girl	531	0.8
	Hotel	1142	1.8
	Camp	904	1.4

Travelers who have visited Tanzania frequently described their activities and interactions with the host communities. Other common topics included transportation, the natural environment, and attractions. Despite the high frequency of positive descriptive terms, there were some negative comments primarily pertaining to the effects they perceived tourism and money had on the culture and their travel experience. For example, one made a point to say, “It was very interesting to see the house, but again I feel uncomfortable with the “live exhibit” and was grateful to step back outside.” Another visitor wrote, “Moshi is officially the most sponsored place in the world. Almost every road sign, landmark sign,

public amenity has some form of sponsor hoarding over it. The local catholic church, for example, is proudly sponsored by Coca-Cola.”

Figure 2 Graphical Representation of Perceived Image



Overall, the perceived image of Tanzania has been largely stable between 2004 and 2008. However, there have been some noticeable changes. Money became more evident in results since 2005 and many were related to negative comments. Many visitors acknowledged the negative effects of money in a developing country. For example, one visitor said, “...as each of us visit, we erode their traditional lifestyle, and visitors receive more of a performance than a cultural exchange.”

Level of Congruency between Projected and Perceived Image

There is a relative level of congruency among the projected and perceived images of Tanzania. Both the projected and perceived image focuses a great deal on the culture and both use positive descriptive terms. However, while there are many similarities, there are some distinctive incongruities that emerge primarily in attractions, economics.

Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Arusha, and Mount Kilimanjaro are all common attractions among both the projected and perceived image of Tanzania. There is some dissonance among other attractions. While travelers are interested in Ngorongoro Crater and Stone Town, Tanzania, on the other hand, is seeking to market the Indian Ocean, Pemba, and Mount Meru.

A major dissonance between the projected and perceived image is the view of poverty and luxury. While the government acknowledges poverty and markets the primitive lifestyle, it is also marketing the luxury and business travel market. There may be many travelers going to Tanzania for luxury accommodations and state-of-the-art facilities, but none that blogged about their travels. Many travelers instead complained about the slow and unreliable Internet service.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Current study examined the projected and perceived image of Tanzania based upon the content analysis of Tanzania's official tourism websites and travel blogs. The study results suggested that Tanzania is currently projected as a country with abundant natural resources and culture and as a destination accommodate to conference tourism. While the projected natural and cultural image of Tanzania is resonated by the visitors, the visitors also perceive Tanzania as a destination facing with over-commercialization and culture corrosion. Furthermore, the dissonances in cognitive image of Tanzania also result in differences in projected and perceived affective image of Tanzania.

Because of the difficulty of controlling the image perceived by online word-of-mouth, it is imperative that negative images and impacts be promptly addressed to ensure congruency between a destination's projected image and perceived image. A projected destination image that is true to itself and true to its targeted consumers is one of the key factors for destination marketing success. This research emphasizes the recommendation that destination marketing organizations continually study the perceived image of their destination and consider the impacts of tourism especially on its environment, economy and culture.

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